

ENROLLED

H.R. No. 1388

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, The year 1997 marks an important milestone for the
2 community of St. Peter the Apostle Catholic Church in Laredo, as
3 it marks the parish's 100th year of existence, and in reflecting on
4 the rich history of the church, its parishioners have, no doubt,
5 rejuvenated and strengthened their own faith; and

6 WHEREAS, In March 1897, as the population of Laredo
7 experienced a tremendous growth spurt due to the burgeoning
8 railroad industry and the increased activity at Fort McIntosh,
9 several members of the Catholic community, among them Daniel Milmo,
10 Quintin Villegas, Juan Benavides, Thomas Ryan, P. J. McMahon, and
11 Albert Urbahn, approached Bishop Peter M. Verdaguer, Vicar
12 Apostolic of the Brownsville Vicariate, requesting that a second
13 Catholic Church be constructed in order to care for the needs of
14 the English-speaking people of Laredo; and

15 WHEREAS, After receiving approval from Bishop Verdaguer,
16 construction was begun on the Gothic church by German craftsman
17 Heinrich Portscheller, under the direction of Father Beautgen; on
18 October 7 of that same year, Bishop Verdaguer, having named the
19 church after his patron, St. Peter the Apostle, blessed the
20 building's cornerstone in which was placed a document commemorating
21 the event as well as copies of the *Laredo Times*, the *San Antonio*
22 *Express*, and the *Southern Messenger* and many relics and rare coins;
23 and

24 WHEREAS, Because of ill health Father Beautgen was unable to

1 serve as pastor, and the project was turned over to Father Edward
2 Russell Chase, who saw the construction until completion and went
3 on to serve as the fledgling parish's first pastor; and

4 WHEREAS, During the next several months, the parishioners of
5 St. Peter's watched the building of their future church; eager to
6 serve the 200 families of his congregation, Father Chase quickly
7 assured the installation of interior furnishings, including wooden
8 pews from Michigan, long-leaf yellow pine floors from the Texas
9 Hill Country, the marble baptismal font from Mexico City, a Farrand
10 and Votey organ from San Antonio, and the pride of the church, a
11 spectacular three-part Gothic altar hand-crafted by Anton
12 Deschermeier of San Antonio; and

13 WHEREAS, On January 9, 1898, St. Peter the Apostle Catholic
14 Church officially opened and was dedicated on January 13 amid much
15 pomp and circumstance; the church was described as "an imposing
16 structure surmounted by three gilded crosses visible from all parts
17 of the city"; and

18 WHEREAS, Seven years after its dedication, on Friday, April
19 28, 1905, a destructive tornado swept through the southwestern
20 sector of the city and destroyed the spire of the church; only a
21 section of the steeple was rebuilt and that is now still present;
22 and

23 WHEREAS, With the exception of the addition of stained glass
24 windows in 1907 and 1919, the church saw few physical changes until
25 November 1952, when, under its new pastor, Father John Lanning, a
26 new marble altar depicting the Last Supper and new communion rails
27 were installed; and

1 WHEREAS, In 1947, during the pastorate of the Most Reverend
2 Mariano Garriga, then Co-Adjutor Bishop of the Diocese of Corpus
3 Christi, St. Peter's Memorial School was established, thereby
4 allowing the parish children the opportunity to attend a Catholic
5 school in their neighborhood; and

6 WHEREAS, In 1994, through the efforts of its pastor, Father
7 Donald Critchlow and several parishioners, the Texas Historical
8 Commission recognized the historical contributions made by the
9 parish by awarding the church a historical marker designating St.
10 Peter the Apostle Catholic Church an official state historical
11 site; and

12 WHEREAS, Throughout its 100 years of existence, St. Peter's
13 has had the unique distinction of having had a Bishop as its
14 Pastor, of witnessing the administration of the Sacrament of Holy
15 Orders to those with a vocation to serve the Lord in religious
16 life, and of meeting the day-to-day spiritual needs of its
17 faithful--from baptism to entrance into eternal life; and

18 WHEREAS, In the midst of its joys and tribulations,
19 disappointments and triumphs, the force behind its survival has
20 been the courage of its parishioners, who with love and devotion
21 have dedicated themselves to the preservation of one of Laredo's
22 most important religious and historical treasures; and

23 WHEREAS, St. Peter the Apostle Catholic Church stands today
24 as a stirring testament to the many hands and hearts that have
25 endeavored to keep it strong through the past century, and as such
26 is truly deserving of praise and recognition; now, therefore, be it

27 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 75th Texas

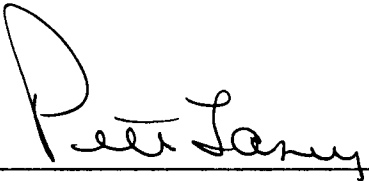
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1 Legislature hereby honor St. Peter the Apostle Catholic Church in
2 Laredo on the occasion of its 100th anniversary and extend to its
3 pastor, Father Donald Critchlow, and its parishioners sincere best
4 wishes for continued success, blessings, and happiness in the years
5 to come; and, be it further

6 RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be
7 prepared for St. Peter the Apostle Catholic Church as an expression
8 of the highest regard by the Texas House of Representatives.

Cuellar

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Speaker of the House

I certify that H.R. No. 1388 was adopted by the House on June 2, 1997, by a non-record vote.



Chief Clerk of the House